

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1260

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UNCLAS HONG KONG 8392

FOR AGRICULTURE, FAS, FCA, GRAIN & FEED DIV.; ERS, FDC DIV.

FROM: AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CH

SUBJECT: PRC WINTER WHEAT HARVEST: PROVINCIAL RETURNS

REF: (A) HONG KONG 7414; (B) HONG KONG 5561; (C) TOFAS 26

BEGIN SUMMARY: RETURNS FROM NINE OF CHINA'S PROVINCES INDICATE A PROBABLE RECORD WINTER WHEAT HARVEST THIS YEAR, PERHAPS 3-5 PERCENT ABOVE 1975 HARVEST. PROVINCIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS HAD IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY SINCE ASSESSMENTS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN EARLY MAY AND EARLY JUNE WERE MADE. END SUMMARY.

1. FAVORABLE REPORTS FROM NINE PROVINCE-LEVEL UNITS, ACCOUNTING FOR APPROXIMATELY 63 PERCENT OF CHINA'S TOTAL WINTER WHEAT AREA, INDICATE THAT WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS HAD CONTINUED TO IMPROVE ON THROUGH TO THE HARVEST WITH THE RESULT THAT 1976 WINTER WHEAT HARVESTS IN EACH OF THE NINE PROVINCES EXCEEDED THOSE OF 1975. INCREASES RANGING PRIMARILY FROM 10 TO 30 PERCENT PROVIDE A WEIGHTED-AVERAGE INCREASE THUS FAR OF 7.2 PERCENT ON A NATIONAL SCALE OVER 1975 RECORD HARVEST OF 33.6 MILLION METRIC TONS.

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2. IN NORTH CHINA, HOPEH AND PEKING REPORTED INCREASES OF 3.2

AND 10 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY. IN EAST CHINA, SHANTUNG (LEADING PROVINCE THIS YEAR) CLAIMED PRODUCTION INCREASE OF 20 PERCENT, KIANGSU AND SHANGHAI 10 AND 30 PERCENT, AND ANHWEI A "RECORD" HARVEST. AND IN CENTRAL-SOUTH REGION, MAJOR PRODUCER HONAN REPORTED AN "INCREASE" OVER 1975, WHILE HUNAN AND KWANGTUNG (NEITHER MAJOR WINTER WHEAT PRODUCERS) REPORTED 70- AND 28-PERCENT INCREASES.

3. COMMENT: QUITE OBVIOUSLY WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS CONTINUED TO IMPROVE FROM TIME AGO OFFICE MADE EARLIER, LESS OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT IN MID-MAY (REF B) AND THE IMPROVED ASSESSMENT OF MID-JUNE (REF A). (IN VIEW OF SIMILARLY IMPROVED CONDITIONS IN U.S., RESULTING IN NEAR-RECORD HARVEST AFTER EARLIER PESSIMISTIC CROP REPORTS, SAME DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING.) IN CASE OF PRC, BETTER-THAN-EXPECTED RESULT IS NO DOUBT COMBINATION OF IMPROVED WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS AND INTENSIFIED EFFORTS OF COMMUNE MEMBERS TO MINIMIZE DAMAGE CAUSED BY NATURAL ADVERSITIES.

4. IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT REPORTS OF HARVEST RESULTS IN THOSE REMAINING PROVINCES WHICH ACCOUNT FOR THE BALANCE (APPROX. 37 PERCENT) OF CHINA'S WINTER WHEAT AREA WILL NOT GREATLY REDUCE THE PRELIMINARILY ESTIMATED GAIN OF AT LEAST 7 PERCENT; THOSE PROVINCES WOULD ALL HAVE TO SHOW SHORTFALLS OF 20 PERCENT JUST TO SHOW A CROP EQUAL TO LAST YEAR'S RECORD HARVEST. ANYTHING BETTER THAN THAT WOULD THUS INDICATE A RECORD HARVEST FOR 1976.

5. BASED ON PROBABLE INCREASE OF 3-5 PERCENT ABOVE 1975 HARVEST, CHINA'S WINTER WHEAT HARVEST COULD REACH 34.6 TO 35.2 MILLION M.T. THIS YEAR.
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